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# Vocabulary Richness in Post-Exilic Prophetic Books

**Yehuda T. Radday / Moshe A. Pollatschek**

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## Vocabulary Richness in Post-Exilic Prophetic Books

By Yehuda T. Radday and Moshe A. Pollatschek

(Tel Aviv, Haifa)

Post-exilic prophetic literature in the Hebrew canon comprises the three Books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. While each is beset with its specific problems, we shall in the following be concerned solely with questions of authorship and homogeneity and explore how vocabulary richness contributes to their solution.

From the point of view of authorship, Haggai is the easiest case. Consisting of merely two chapters, it was doubtless penned by Haggai and is clearly dated in the winter of 520 B.C.E.

Zechariah's oracles and visions followed Haggai's by a few weeks. The first eight of the fourteen chapters of his book are beyond any doubt his own work. As to the remaining six, opinions are divided: they are alternatively ascribed (a) to Zechariah, (b) to an anonymous prophet who may have lived before or after him, or (c) ch. 9-11 and 12-14 each to one likewise unknown and undated author.

Although consisting of no more than three chapters, the Book of Malachi raises even more complex questions. It is conjecturally dated at some time during the Second Commonwealth, i.e. between the midst of the fifth and the end of the fourth centuries. The name Malachi itself, though mentioned in the first verse, is taken by many savants either as a misunderstanding or as an intentional later insertion. The book contains six rather disconnected oracles dealing with widely varying issues.

Other details about the composition, contents etc. of these three books have no place here and may be looked up in any Introduction to Biblical literature or in commentaries where they are treated with the conventional tools of Biblical criticism.

To these tools, a new one has lately been added: statistical linguistics aided by the computer. Regrettably, this discipline and even the machine itself are still being repudiated by a not inconsiderable number of Bible scholars who contend that the first, belonging to the exact sciences, and the second, being an insensitive electronic instrument, should not intrude into philology, the less so into Biblical exegesis. Whatever its motives, this unfortunate attitude is indefensible and unfounded: no legitimate means is in principle out of bounds in any branch of scholarship. If Biblicists persist in refusing to acquaint themselves with statistics and the computer, they will one day find themselves as unprepared as they were when scientific archeology made its first appearance. It took them half a generation to recover from the shock of its advent and almost another half before they put this new discipline and its tools to good use in their research.

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